

Christian workers survive Nepal quake

NEPAL (BP and local reports) — Notes of a praise song carried from one end of the field to another. As the song ended, another started from a different direction. The two singing churches provided a sense of peace amidst the screams of neighbors sitting in open fields seeking a safe place from the aftershocks and tremors a day after Nepal's 7.8-magnitude earthquake.

The quake hit April 25 just 50 miles outside the capital city of Kathmandu and reached as far as India, Bangladesh, and the Chinese region of Tibet. It was the strongest in the region in more than 80 years, with thousands killed and injured and total destruction of buildings and homes.

No Southern Baptists or other Christian workers in the quake area were reported killed, missing, or injured, but the overall toll is expected to rise as rescue efforts expand from the cities to the countryside.

Aftershocks continue to rock the area. The largest aftershock hit the afternoon of April 26, registering 6.7 in magnitude and causing panic and fear for thousands of locals and tourists packing the streets and open fields of Kathmandu.

Government officials advised everyone to stay outside until their homes and buildings can be checked.

A Christian worker said local churches and believers are responding as the "hub" for the communities by providing access

to shelter, clean water, and food. People constructed tents from poles and tarps or anything that would provide protection from the cold night and possible rains.

Even a group of volunteers from a North Carolina Baptist church joined the ranks of those sleeping outside their hotels. The volunteer team is reported to be "shaken up, but fine" and helping with immediate needs around them.

"Some pastors and discipleship trainers' homes were damaged and even destroyed yesterday, yet they are taking care of their community," the Christian worker said. About 30 people are staying in a field near the area where their team pitched tents. "Each time there is a tremor, everyone screams. We had earthquakes all night and much of the day," the worker said.

Like most of the Christian population in Nepal — about one percent of a 28.8 million mostly Hindu nation — the worker and her husband were at church when the earthquake hit at 11:56 a.m. local time. The power went out, followed by a long and violent tremor. Panic ensued, and people in the church began to pray and cry out to the Lord for their protection and safety.

The congregation ran to the one and only exit. "We stood up and had time to hang onto each other but were then thrown to the ground," the worker said. "I

see NEPAL on p. 9



DAMAGE SEVERE — Kathmandu residents inspect the destruction caused by the April 25 earthquake that killed thousands and injured many more thousands in the small, mountainous Asian nation. The earthquake registered 7.8 on the Richter Scale. (BP photo courtesy of IMB)



Prayers for Nepal

- Pray for basic shelter, water, and food.
- Pray for God's people to deeply know His comfort and peace during this time.
- Pray for people encountering massive aftershocks.
- Thank God for the safety of volunteer teams and other Christian workers.

Southern Baptists already responding

By Don Gann, director
MBCB Men's Ministry

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, of which Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief is a part, has already begun responding to the Nepal earthquake of April 25. Local believers trained by Southern Baptist personnel are assessing the damage and the human needs created by this Richter Scale 7.8 magnitude event.

Baptist Global Response (BGR) coordinates Southern Baptist international disaster response. The 42 state Baptist conventions making up Southern Baptist Disaster Relief in general, and Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief in particular, stand ready to assist

those affected when requested by response coordinators.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief has a long-term focus. Needs of those affected are both immediate and long-term. We do not self-deploy, but seek to be a part of the coordinated effort to bring Help, Healing, and Hope to those affected.

For up-to-date information from Baptist Global Response, visit the website gobgr.org. Those who have been trained and qualified for disaster relief response and are interested in being mobilized should Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief be asked to send teams, please send contact information to the following email: dgann@mbcb.org



WAITING IT OUT — Afraid to return to their homes because of strong aftershocks from the April 25 earthquake in Nepal, residents of Kathmandu wait in a hastily constructed temporary shelter until the all clear signal is given by authorities. (BP photo courtesy of International Mission Board)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Bad case of laryngitis

There's a segment of Mississippi's political and business establishments that have been strangely silent for the past several years. They've apparently been hiding under their desks as the bad economy exposed their lies to the people of the state.

Remember when we were told a little legalized gambling on a few riverboats would solve all our money problems? Remember when we were told the small gambling venues hadn't actually solved all our problems after all, but allowing massive, permanent structures over water would? Remember when we were told the multi-billion-dollar casinos over the water weren't enough to solve our problems, but allowing them to creep on to dry land would?

That was before officials had to make deep cuts to alarmingly anemic budgets as the state and national economies sank into the Great Recession. The Mississippi Miracle, also known to proponents as the Gambling Revolution, turned out to be neither a miracle nor a revolution.

The gamblers, who were always about transferring as much money out of Mississippi as possible anyway, began to high-tail it out of the state. The gleaming casino complexes began to close from Tunica to the Gulf Coast, taking all those promised jobs with them — at least the mostly lower-level jobs that actually did materialize.

Members of Mississippi's gambling/political complex apparently began to understand they had led the citizens of Mississippi on a chase for fool's gold. They lost their voices rather quickly.

One has to wonder where all of them are today. They haven't been on television lately, trying to convince us that legalized gambling is an economic panacea. They haven't been on radio talk shows, arguing that we should have gambling because everyone else has it. They're

not writing op-ed pieces in the newspapers defending their point of view.

Funny how that works, isn't it?

We have legalized gambling. We have all the social ills that go hand-in-hand with legalized gambling. What we don't have are the economic benefits we were promised. Meanwhile, the human toll continues to mount as the mass addictive behavior that defines legalized gambling takes its toll on the good citizens of this state.

Embezzlement and theft are rife. No company or charity or institution is safe where gambling is legal. That's a provable fact. The list of fallen Mississippians includes lawyers, bankers, teachers, law enforcement officers, and others who could not resist the lure of one of the most addictive activities known to man.

It should also be noted that all the crimes committed in the name of gambling are not "soft" crimes like embezzlement. At least one elderly woman was murdered in her home for gambling money. A couple was slaughtered in a casino elevator for their winnings. Bank robbers go from the scene of their crimes straight to casinos, where they gamble away their ill-gotten gain in a matter of minutes. Serious crimes committed in casino parking lots are too numerous to list, but include leaving children to shiver in cars in freezing weather as their parents gamble away the family food money inside.

All of this is happening in Mississippi, where we were assured by our political and business leaders that all the known social ills of legalized gambling would be tolerable given the unlimited amount of money that would come rolling in.

The truth had to come out sooner or later, though. Now we're living with the economic and human consequences of that bad decision. Sometimes we really do get what we deserve.

Women, use influence for good

Pick a woman in Scripture who is known for anything, and you'll find she was a woman of influence.

Think about Deborah (Judges 4-5). She stirred up a military leader to faithful action when he wanted to run away from a problem. She exhorted him to trust the Lord in the face of overwhelming odds. She was a true leader. She never made success about her — in fact she pointed out the strengths of everyone else.

What about Esther (Esther 4-8)? She was planted in a pagan palace so she could influence a king to spare her people from ethnic cleansing. No military intervention. No revolution. Just one woman submitted to God. Her predecessor, Vashti, was de-throned after digging her heels in against the king's request. Why? Because even pagan politicians knew that women had influence.

Don't forget about Abigail, my personal favorite. She was the picture of grace under fire, defusing the temper of a future king and intervening in what would have been an out-of-control conflict (1 Samuel 25). Quick-witted and sharp-minded, she spoke with wisdom, diplomacy, and skill.

It wasn't all good influence, however. Sarah (Genesis 16) convinced her husband Abraham to fulfill God's promise his own way instead of waiting on God to work. Jezebel influenced her husband King Ahab to deal treacherously with a landowner and the nation of Israel to serve the pagan gods of surrounding nations (1 Kings 19, 21).

It all began with Eve, who pulled her husband Adam into doing the one thing he knew he wasn't to do and persuading him to disobey the Lord (Genesis 3).

Euodia and Syntyche must have had some strong personalities for Paul to tell them to get along. Apparently their riff was causing some serious issues in the church at Philippi (Philippians 4:2). Miriam influenced all of Israel's women to celebrate their deliverance after crossing the Red Sea. All the women followed her lead (Exodus 15), but then she helped instigate a rebellion against her brother Moses about who was going to be in charge (Numbers 12). Because of it, God struck her



Guest opinion
with Katy McCoy

with leprosy, stalling the entire nation from moving forward.

Thankfully, she is remembered on a positive note (Micah 6:4) Miriam's words had weighty consequences. She was definitely a woman of influence.

These women weren't necessarily in some great position of power or financially wealthy. They just used their influence right where they were.

The woman at the well in John 4 went from covering up her past to using it as the introduction to telling her whole town about Jesus, all because she met the Messiah. Priscilla was uprooted from her home in Rome and started over in Corinth, but that didn't stop her from nurturing a young preacher named Apollos (Acts 18).

These were ordinary women. Much like us, they probably didn't feel they had particularly extraordinary lives — but they all had influence. The question was how they chose to use it. Maybe you find yourself in the middle of interpersonal conflict like Abigail, or discouraged by other people's lack of faith-filled action, like Deborah. Maybe you're starting over in a new city, new school, or new ministry, like Priscilla. Perhaps you feel stuck in a scenario that seems irredeemable like Esther. Maybe you've experienced the Messiah like the woman at the well and are ready to start telling the people around you about Him.

Whoever you are, wherever you are, you are a woman of influence. The question for you and me is, how will we use it?

McCoy is the editor of *Biblical Woman.com*, where this column first appeared. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in systematic theology at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

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Pastors' Conference slated June 14-15 in Columbus

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — Though this year's Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference will feature a diverse array of speakers in terms of both race and age, conference president William Rice, pastor of Calvary Church in Clearwater, Fla., hopes those factors won't be the annual gathering's focus.

The June 14-15 Pastors' Conference will feature preaching, worship, and prayer to undergird the ministry of pastors and their wives. The sessions at the Greater Columbus (Oh.) Convention Center will be held prior to the SBC's June 16-17 annual meeting there.

"We really wanted to have guys who were strong preachers and teachers of the Word," Rice said. "My focus wasn't the latest methodological fad or the latest gimmick that somebody has, but guys that are going to preach from the Word."

Speakers for the evening of June 14 will include Dean Fulks, pastor of LifePoint Church in Columbus, Oh., and Russell Moore, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.

The morning of June 15 will feature messages from Vance Pittman, pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas; Paul David Tripp, executive director of the Association of Biblical Counselors' Center for Pastoral Life and Care; and David Uth, pastor of First Church in Orlando, Fla.

Speakers on the afternoon of June 15 will include Clint Pressley, pastor of Hickory Grove Church in Charlotte, N.C.; H.B. Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Church in Jacksonville, Fla.; and Steve Gaines, pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tenn.

The June 15 evening speakers will include J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; James MacDonald, pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, Ill.; and David Platt, president of the SBC International Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

Worship will be led by Christian recording artist Travis Cottrell, Harvest Bible Chapel's Vertical Church Band, and Calvary Church's worship team. The Pastors' Conference offering will go to the Stowe Mission, an outreach of the Metro Columbus Association that seeks to meet physical and spiritual needs in inner city Columbus.

This year's leadership team, which includes Jeremy Westbrook, pastor of Living Hope Church in Marysville, Oh., as vice president, and Drew Landry, pastor of Spotswood Church in Fredericksburg, Va., as treasurer, hopes the conference will refresh pastors and their families.

"Our prayer is that every single pastor would really be strengthened and encouraged, and that God would speak to them," Rice said.

The Pastors' Conference is free and requires no registration. To learn more about this year's schedule, sponsors, and theme, visit sbpc.net. For a schedule, visit sbpc.net/schedule.

Child care for children ages birth through 12 years will be offered during all Pastors' Conference sessions. Children ages four through 12 may register for a conference provided by Children's Conferences International. Register at childrensconferences.com.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief child-care volunteers will offer childcare for newborns through age five during the Pastors' Conference.



RICE



Carson scrubbed from conference schedule

"As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dr. Carson is publicly identified with theological positions that differ from those of Southern Baptists. While this is true, I believed, and still believe, that leaders gathered for our Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference are open to listening to persons from outside our denomination. I believe most are willing to hear from national leaders even if we disagree on some points of doctrine as we have done in the past, particularly when the point of the discussion is a biblical worldview of prevailing cultural issues."

William Rice
conference president

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — Likely Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson, a Seventh-day Adventist, and leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference have "mutually agreed" that Carson will not address the Pastors' Conference in June in Columbus, Oh., as previously scheduled.

"We didn't want this to become a distraction for our convention," Pastors' Conference President William Rice told Baptist Press. "A number of people began to write about it and express their views on it, and it threatened to become a distraction we never wanted it to be. We felt like for the health of the convention, the health of the Pastors' Conference... the better thing to do was to mutually agree it's not the right time to do it."

Carson, currently a cultural commentator and professor emeritus of neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, was scheduled to address the Pastors' Conference on the evening of June 14 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. Some Southern Baptists raised theological and political concerns in late March and April, with Texas pastor Bart Barber and Baptist21, a network of younger Southern Baptist leaders, posting blog articles objecting to Carson's scheduled appearance.

Barber is a former SBC first vice president and current Southwestern Seminary trustee.

Among the concerns cited were that Carson's appearance could be construed as an endorsement of his presumed presidential campaign, that his appearance could be construed as an endorsement of the Republican Party, and that it would be inappropriate for a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to address the Pastors' Conference.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, according to the North American Mission Board's truth.net website, is "in basic agreement with historic, biblical Christianity. Thus, the SDA is not a cult by definition. However, the SDA can be correctly regarded as a Christian sect because it has a number of distinctive doctrines not in accord with the mainstream of historic Christian faith."

Among the "distinctive" doctrines referenced by NAMB, the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes Christians who worship on Sunday are in error and "often implies that certain outward acts

of righteousness are necessary to maintain one's assurance of salvation."

In a blog post published April 24, Rice, pastor of Calvary Church in Clearwater, Fla., addressed concerns regarding Carson's affiliation with Seventh-day Adventists. Rice's complete blog post is at calvary.us/pastorwillysblog.

"As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dr. Carson is publicly identified with theological positions that differ from those of Southern Baptists," Rice wrote. "While this is true, I believed, and still believe, that leaders gathered for our Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference are open to listening to persons from outside our denomination."

"I believe most are willing to hear from national leaders even if we disagree on some points of doctrine as we have done in the past, particularly when the point of the discussion is a biblical worldview of prevailing cultural issues."

Rice told Baptist Press that Carson's appearance was never intended to be a political endorsement and Carson understood that. Pastors' Conference leaders "felt like [Carson] could speak about public issues and the larger national issues going on culturally, but do so in a decidedly apolitical way as a guy whose career has not been in politics," Rice said.

Rice's blog post "respectfully disagree[d]" with those who believe Southern Baptists "should avoid all political involvements."

"While I know of no Southern Baptist leader who believes our answer is found in a political party or political solution, there are times when we must be engaged in the public arena," Rice wrote. "John the Baptist was not jailed for preaching the Gospel. He was jailed for speaking truth to power. Southern Baptists cannot and should not back away from appropriate engagement in political life."

"If Southern Baptists will not speak, then who will?" Rice continued. "In these current days where Christian brothers are being butchered overseas and religious liberties are under assault at home, will we stay silent out of some misguided attempt to avoid politics altogether? I pray not. Political leaders who stand for religious liberty, speak out for the oppressed and have the strength of moral convictions should know they have a friend in Southern Baptists."



CARSON

Like many of you every day, in fact day and night, I receive emails from people and companies and fundraisers. Now some of the mail that comes into my e-box is from folks I know and am happy to hear from. Some of the emails are from people or churches or companies who are needing information or help with some issue or idea and some is new electronic but old junk mail. But most of it like that is just totally impersonal and actually disconnected. Some of it will come with a greeting, "Hello, James Robert Futral," which is a dead giveaway that they don't know who they're talking to or what's going on. Some of it is just addressed to, "Hi." But the most impersonal of all came the other day that said, "Hello _____."

Most of the time I would not pay any attention at all to what they are selling or saying, but I was attracted to see what person or company who thinks they're making a connection by saying, "Hello _____." Smoke signals are more personal than that. Now I know that probably Hello _____ was pulled off some data file with my email address and a missing name and so the computer default position was just to say _____ I was not highly offended at being called _____. It didn't hurt or humiliate me one bit, but I can assure you that I checked to see what company was sending it and what they were wanting because I did not want to be a part of what they were doing.

I know that the generations just behind me actually think that that is all connectedness with their community world and that that's just who we are now, people who don't know anybody but stay connected with all these blanks.



Hello

Folks on Twitter and Facebook and Instagram and who connect with users out there by calling them _____ will no doubt one day in some way come to their senses and realize this is really not connectedness at all.

I am well aware that Scripture does not have a lot to say about social media and all of its ramifications, but it does have a lot to say about personal relationships and how significant they are and how they need to be strengthened. So for all of this and all of us, let me encourage you to think about three simple things.

One – evaluate. In context of your Mr. _____ relationships, pause and evaluate your connections. It could be that some of them are meaningless and empty; others can even be wrong and destructive. Not everything we read on the Internet and especially on these personal connections is valid and some of it is not

just borderline. It is nothing more than gross gossip. A bunch of it is unverified, unimportant, and improper information. It would be good to evaluate the reality that participating in gossip is not just passing it along, it's also devouring it, and the problem that is created is that you are filling your mind with things that you would be far better served without. It is in some cases like loading your life up with garbage.

Two – extricate. Back away from your entanglement with some of the World Wide Web. Recently I was talking with a man who in his church had been challenged to give up something important and meaningful to him during the preparation for Easter. He thoughtfully and prayerfully gave up social media. As he was talking with me about it he said, "The first week was absolutely terrible. I did not think I was going to make it." In

the opening days of the fast from his cell phone and iPad, he began to realize how dependent, or maybe as he himself said, "addicted," he had become, looking every few minutes at something on the Internet or the latest post by someone on Facebook. He was almost at the end of his fast when he was talking to me and he intended to log back in, but with a different thought process and not be so engaged with all that stuff.

Third – elevate. The man who was sharing with me told how it was that there were people right around him that he just zoned out from in order to look at his iPhone or iPad and there were real, live human beings that he could have interacted with and chose not to or at least was ignoring them at the moment. Deliberately, thoughtfully, think about stepping aside from cyberspace and see and hear and interact with the people who are in the space just around you. Elevate those relationships. Make the people that you know and see priority in your life. Enjoy them. Encourage them. Get to know them. For some of them probably will be your children or grandchildren who in just a few weeks you'll turn around twice and they'll be grown. Maybe the kids will be a mom or a dad or even a grandparent and then as you flip through your Facebook file a few times you will wonder why you didn't take a few more minutes with them.

This may mean nothing to many of you, but if it is meaningful or not, just chalk it up as a thought from Mr. _____.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Just for the Record



The children of **NEW HOME CHURCH, SMITH COUNTY**, enjoyed an Easter egg hunt Apr. 3.



Children of **NEW BETHEL CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY**, are shown reacting to a taste test conducted during a Team Kids session April 19 led by Camille Parker and Melanie Shelton.



Several newcomers participated in the March Ministry Assistant/Secretary conference at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center. They included Linda Sander-son, **FIRST CHURCH, ABBEVILLE**; Diane Stone, **FIRST CHURCH, NEW ALBANY**; Robin McDona-ld, **CALVARY, NEWTON**; Wina Wills, **PINE BELT ASSOCIATION**; and Karen Smith, **NEW LIBERTY & SCOTT COUNTY ASSOCIATION**; Amy Birkey, **JACKSON ASSOCIATION**.



The children of **FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA**, enjoyed an Easter egg hunt and a day of fun and games at Bull Bottom Farms.

In other Church News:

► **Eastside Church, Pearl**, is hosting its 41st annual gospel singing jubilee May 2, 6:30 p.m., featuring the Dixie Echoes Quartet, Tim Frith & Gospel Echoes, The Pearl Quartet, and Revelations. For more information, call (601) 906-0677.



The preschool and children of **TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL**, prepared 50 coloring books for the church missionary family in Peru for Children's Ministry Day.

Sine Die and So Am I!!!

One phrase our state legislators love to hear in early April each year is "Sine Die." Sine Die designates the adjournment of the present legislative session with no future date set for resumption. Shortly afterwards, the Capitol halls go silent until next year unless Governor Bryant calls a special session to deal with two or three items that still need attention.

The CAC sends out a big "Thank You" to our legislators and our Governor for passing and signing SB 2695, the "Equal Opportunity for Students With Special Needs Act," and HB 885, "Insurance Coverage for Autism." The special needs bill allows parents to withdraw their child from public school to receive an

Education Scholarship Account of \$6,500. These funds will enable parents to place their child in other facilities if their current school or district cannot meet the special needs of their child.

HB 885 addresses the fact that 1 in 68 children in the United States suffers from a disorder called autism. This statute now requires insurance plans in Mississippi to cover treatment for autism. Both these bills enable families to better provide for their children.

Our legislators finally passed a bill that become law against texting and driving. It was long overdue! Also, I doubt many of you will miss putting inspection stickers on your automobiles.

Many issues were discussed,



with Jimmy Porter

but being an election year some of the more controversial subjects such as education funding, tax cuts, the Institute of Higher Learning Board, and a few other items were delayed until later. One prolife bill died in committee, and all proposed bills to improve the election process in Mississippi also died in committee.

Now for the "So Am I!" On April 1, 2000, the CAC gave me the opportunity of becoming the Executive Director-Treasurer. This past April 1st I celebrated fifteen years in this capacity, and on April 30, 2015, I, too, will Sine Die. I have officially retired and will be vacating the office at the close of that day. It is with mixed emotions that I share these words, but with great joy I firmly believe this is God's direction for my life and the CAC.

In this, my last article for The Baptist Record, there are so many I need to thank. Sure,

I will miss some, but please know it was not intentional.

I give thanks for the opportunity to work alongside a gifted body of believers here in the Mississippi Baptist Building. Dr. Futral and his staff have been worthy partners in ministry as we have confronted many moral and social issues. It has been a joy to minister alongside one who has been a friend since our freshman days at Clarke College. "Thank you, Doc!"

I give thanks to the many wonderful individuals who have given their time and talents to serve as a board member for the CAC. Their input has been invaluable in helping us fulfill the mandates given to the CAC by our state Convention in 1964.

You, our Mississippi Baptist Family, have been such a blessing to us. God has granted me the privilege to be in and preach in many of our churches. You have supported us through your Cooperative Program gifts, and a "Thank You!" seems so small, but it comes from my heart.

In the past fifteen years wonderful friendships have been formed with our statewide elected leaders and the members of the House and Senate. I will cherish those forever and thank you all for allowing me your time and input as we discussed and debated legislation.

During my time here I have been privileged to work with

two consultants, Lee Yancey and Rob Chambers. I thank them for using their talents and gifts in service to the ministry of the CAC. All three of us must "take our hats off" to Mrs. Rita McCollum who has been a wise and faithful ministry assistant. "Thank you, Mrs. Rita!"

There is no need to look back and enumerate the things that happened along the way, because this is a journey yet to be completed both for me and the CAC. God called me into the ministry at age sixteen. Early on, my happiest days were on Sundays with a Bible in hand, a congregation in the pews, and a sermon to share which I believed God had placed on my heart. That is the way I want to conclude my life — a Bible, a pulpit, and a sermon!

The CAC has only had three Executive Director-Treasurers in its 50 years of existence, Dr. J. Clark Hensley, Dr. Paul Griffin Jones II, and me. The Commission already has a search committee in place and a mandated process to follow. Pray for them as they search for the next person to lead them into the future. They will soon share more information about this process.

Porter serves as executive director-treasurer for the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. He can be contacted at 601-292-3332 or jporter@christianaction.com.

Submission Guidelines



The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

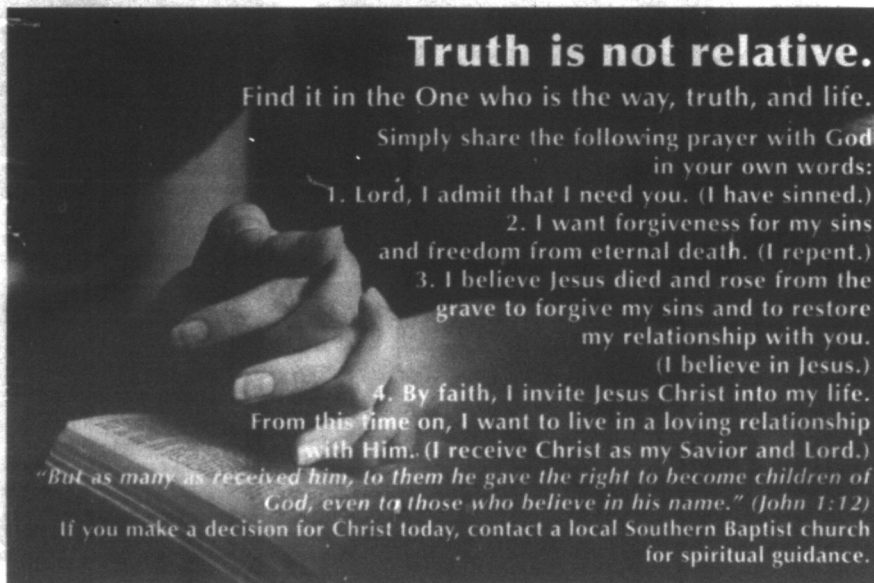
Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

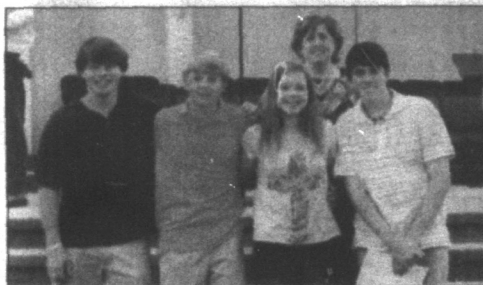
From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



Bible Drill



IMMANUEL CHURCH, GREENWOOD, recognizes its youth drillers and children's drillers.



OAKHURST CHURCH, CLARKSDALE, recognizes its youth and children's drillers.



BETHSAIDA CHURCH, MONTGOMERY-CARROLL ASSOCIATION, recognizes its youth drillers, children's drillers, and Bible Buddies.



ACKERMAN CHURCH, ACKERMAN, recognizes its Bible drillers.

FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA, recognizes its youth Bible drillers who recently participated in district and state drills. The church also recognizes its Bible Buddies.



FIRST CHURCH, INDIANOLA, recognizes its youth drillers.

SILVER CREEK CHURCH, MCCOMB, recognizes its children's drillers; Katelyn Blackwell, standalone photo, is recognized for her 3rd year in the drills.



FIRST CHURCH, INDIANOLA, recognizes its children's drillers.

WESTWOOD CHURCH, MERIDIAN, recognizes its youth drillers and children's drillers.

Staff Changes



LEMOYNE CHURCH, BILOXI, has called Abe Hodges as pastor. He is a Gulfport native and holds degrees from Mississippi College and Southern Seminary. Previously he was the children and family pastor at First Church, Rayville, La. He is shown with his wife Lindsay Page and children John Hayden and Ethan.



MT. PLEASANT CHURCH, WEST, has called Tommy Clark as pastor. He is shown with his wife Marilynn.



FIRST CHURCH, DURANT, has called Lyn Nations as bivocational pastor. He is shown with his wife Virginia.

BIBLIOCIPHER

BSU OPKT JKBQKU KGHKKUASFET, BSU

ZBAU YSK OY BSYOPKQ, CPBO WBSSKQ

YJ WBS AZ OPAZ, OPBO KXKS OPK CASU

BSU OPK ZKB YVKT PAW?

WBQM JYNQ:JYQOT-YSK

Clue: J = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Isaiah 1:2

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Just for the Record



Shown is the regional Korean worship service at **IMMANUEL CHURCH, HATTIESBURG,** Mar. 22, celebrating the church's sponsorship of the new church plant, the Korean Church of Hattiesburg. Shown are Korean pastors and their wives from across Louisiana and Mississippi.



NEW VISION COMMUNITY CHURCH, SUMMIT, held their Easter egg hunt at the home of Sissy Wallace on Boyd Ranch Apr. 4.



NEW HENLEYFIELD CHURCH, CARRIERE, licensed Thomas Alsobrooks to the ministry Apr. 12. He is shown with pastor Ray Allen.



FIRST CHURCH, CRYSTAL SPRINGS, celebrated the 35th anniversary of the church's kindergarten ministry Apr. 19. The students enrolled in the kindergarten classes sang several songs prior to pastor Stan Weatherford's sermon. Afterwards, kindergarten parents, guests, and members had lunch at the church.



Eighteen from **SILVER CREEK CHURCH, MCCOMB,** attended the mother/daughter weekend at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center Apr. 10 - 11.



Children of **ARKADELPHIA CHURCH, BAI-LEY,** are shown during the dedication of the church's new children's department and the first children's church Mar. 29. Dano Rainer, pastor.

Crossover memories lead to big plans this year

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — Southern Baptist church planter Jeremy Dickson of Baltimore has seen firsthand the impact of Crossover upon the ministries of a new church.

The week before last summer's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Baltimore, Dickson's Infinity Church worked with Southern Baptist volunteers during the annual evangelistic outreach to get the word out about a health fair in the church's neighborhood. Thanks to the help of volunteers who showed up to help, Dickson believes the event was a rousing success. In fact, Dickson is so grateful for the support of Southern Baptists during last year's Crossover that he's bringing a team to this June's Crossover Columbus along with volunteers from other Baltimore Association churches as a way to say "thank you."

Crossover Columbus will be held June 13, the Saturday prior to the start of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Columbus, Oh., on June 16.

Dickson says nine people from his church have already signed up to be a part of this year's event.

They will be helping a Columbus church with a block party in their neighborhood.

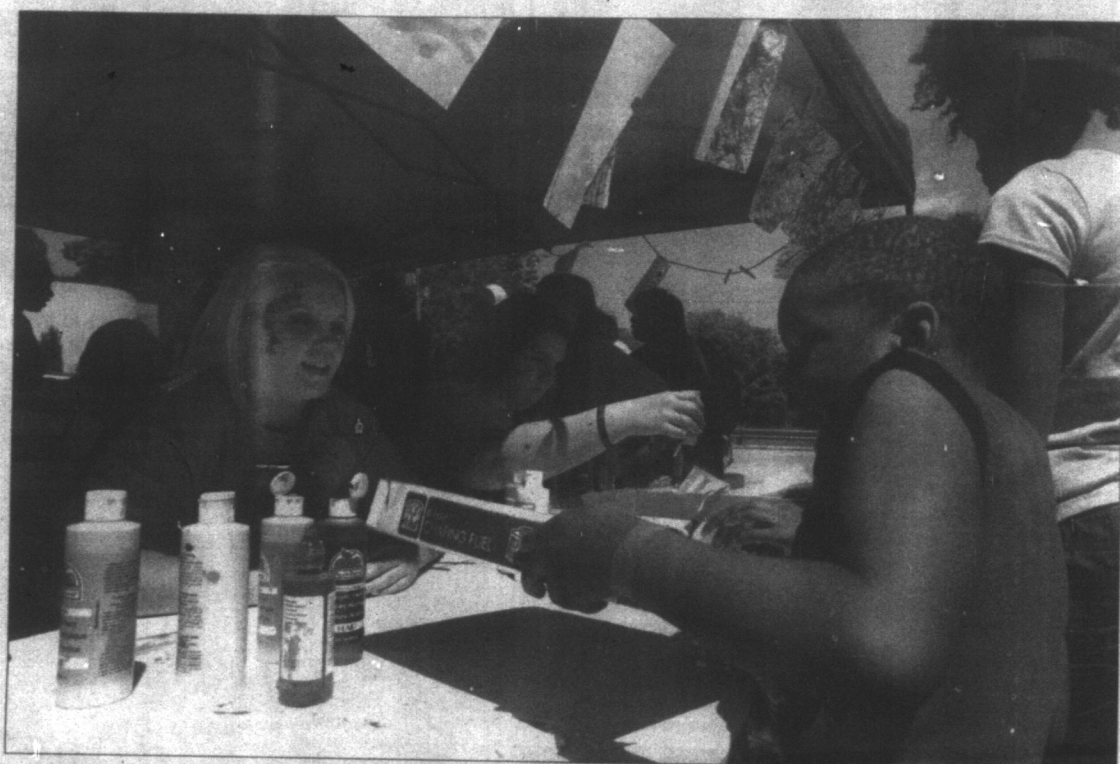
"We want to 'pay it forward' and say 'thank you' to those who came and helped us," Dickson said.

Crossover is held each year in the host city of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. A partnership between the North American Mission Board and the local Southern Baptist association, the outreach includes churches throughout the host city as well as volunteers from churches throughout North America.

Infinity Church members have seen four people they met through Crossover come to faith in Christ since last summer, Dickson said. The church has baptized three of those new believers. Although it's hard to quantify the influence of Crossover, he noted the event also contributed to the church plant crossing the 60-person barrier in attendance soon afterward.

"It means the world to us to join with brothers and sisters who cared enough about us to give up a week to a week and a half in order to come and help us serve our community, especially since our neighborhood in Baltimore is much rougher than what many of them had experienced back home," Dickson said.

Dickson noted that through the Crossover event he had one member of his church step up to lead future outreach efforts by the church. After being asked by members of the community



HAVING FUN, SHARING GOSPEL — Jordan McKinion (left), a member of Neshoba Church, Union (Miss.), helps a Crossover block party participant with glitter ball crafts at last year's Crossover Baltimore event at Colonial Church, Baltimore. This year's Crossover Columbus event is set for June 13, the Saturday before the start of the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Columbus, Oh. (BP photo courtesy of NAMB).

to do the event again, the church plant has committed to host a similar event this August.

Robert Anderson, pastor of Colonial Church in Randallstown, Md., called Crossover "one of the most impactful events" in his church's history. The church had hoped 500 people would attend their first Colonial Fest event. Anderson said they were dreaming of 800 people showing up. Instead, more than 1,500 people participated.

Anderson said he was particularly excited that so many people from a nearby apartment complex participated in the event. The effort opened up additional ministry opportunities in that community.

He also appreciated the opportunity to get more of his congregation involved in ministry efforts which led to more people getting trained for evangelism. The event taught us to trust God for big

"This was an opportunity to say to our community that we're doing this together. Everyone has their own neck of the woods, their own Jerusalem. This allows us to work together in concert to impact our Jerusalem, which in turn impacts the whole city."

Robert Anderson

pastor of Colonial Church in Randallstown, Md.

things, so we're going to do it again this year," said Anderson, who was serving as the president of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware last summer as his church participated in Crossover.

The joint work of Southern Baptists in the city last summer was a great witness to their community, Anderson says.

"This was an opportunity to say to our community that we're doing this together. Everyone has their own neck of the

woods, their own Jerusalem. This allows us to work together in concert to impact our Jerusalem, which in turn impacts the whole city."

For an overview or to learn more about preparing to participate at Crossover Columbus, visit namb.net/crossover. For additional information, visit crossovercolumbus.org. Collegiate groups can discover more about opportunities at forcolumbus.org.

Floyd to be nominated for second presidential term



FLOYD

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd will be nominated for a second term as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear announced April 20.

Floyd "is a leader God has raised up for us at this crucial hour, and sensing God's hand upon him, I want to see him lead us for another year,"

Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., wrote in a statement to Baptist Press announcing his intention to nominate Floyd at the June 16-17 SBC annual meeting in Columbus, Oh.

Floyd has been pastor of the multi-campus Cross Church in northwest Arkansas for 28 years. He also serves as general editor of the Bible Studies

for Life curriculum published by LifeWay Christian Resources and as lead pastor and strategist with the North American Mission Board. Floyd served as chairman of the SBC's Great Commission Task Force in 2009-10 and is a former president of the SBC Pastors' Conference and former chairman of the SBC Executive Committee. He also was a member of the SBC's

Program and Structure Task Force during the mid-1990s that produced The Covenant for a New Century's SBC restructuring, streamlining of the number of SBC entities to nine from the former 12, and the development of updated ministry assignments for each SBC entity.

No other nominations for SBC president have been announced.

African American Fellowship to meet in Columbus

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — Revival for the church and spiritual awakening for the U.S. culture are the focus of the National African American Fellowship (NAAF) as it holds its annual meeting in Columbus, Oh., June 14-15, according to NAAF President K. Marshall Williams Sr.

The group encourages Christians to pray and fast to that end, said Williams, pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

"We are praying that God will pour out His Spirit, like a mighty purifying fire, of deep conviction, confession, spiritual

brokenness with genuine fruits of repentance from the sins of immorality, abortion, crime, racism, injustice, etc. that have been systemic satanic strongholds in our nation and our world," Williams told Baptist Press, "so that we will see loving unity in the Body of Christ which will usher in an unprecedented revival, spiritual awakening, and healing in our land!"

NAAF will meet in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, and attendees will participate in the Crossover community

outreach, enjoy worship, conduct business, and hold its annual banquet.

"We are seeking the Lord for His power and wisdom, so that His love, mercy, and justice will rule in polity and praxis," Williams said, "so we can be used as instruments of righteousness to push back darkness in this sin sick secular society!"

Mark Croston, preaching pastor of the Living Grace Church in Mt. Juliet, TN, will deliver the message at NAAF's annual worship service at 10 a.m. on June 14, at New Antioch

Bible Fellowship, 1415 Lancaster Ave. in Reynoldsburg, Oh., a Columbus suburb.

Croston is national director of black church partnerships at LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. Trent Hayes is host pastor. NAAF is also encouraging its membership to attend the June 14th Pastor's Conference session at 6 p.m. at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

Ray Gaffney, pastor of Galilee Church in Defiance, Oh., will preach the devotion during NAAF's business meeting at 4 p.m. on June 15, in Room

C226 of the convention center. Gaffney is president of the African American Fellowship of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio.

During the business meeting, NAAF plans to focus on better serving and strengthening the approximately 3,500 African American Southern Baptist churches and missions. Additional priorities are holding conferences, symposiums, webinars for equipping churches in all areas of ministry, and maximizing the participation of NAAF churches in SBC Life.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, DURANT IS SEEKING A PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE CHURCH SECRETARY. Please send resume to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, Durant, 132 West Mulberry Street, Durant, MS 39063

EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN INDIANOLA, MS IS IN SEARCH OF A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, P. O. Box 466, Indianola, MS 38751 or email to Shirley Betts at sbetts@bellsouth.net.

STRONG RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH IN PINOLA, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Gene Farmer at 209 Katie Bush Rd Pinola, MS 39149

VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH IN MATHISTON, MS. IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR EITHER A BI-VOCATIONAL OR A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Victory Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 12, Mathiston, Ms.

SOUTH MCCOMB BAPTIST IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER TO LEAD AND SERVE. Email all resumes to smbc01@bellsouth.net.

SMALL BAPTIST CHURCH IN NORTH RANKIN COUNTY IN NEED OF A BI-VOCATIONAL PIANO PLAYER, AND, ALSO, A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR. Please send resumes to the Lake Harbor Baptist Church P.O. Box 339 Sandhill, Ms 39161.

ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH, A SMALL RURAL CHURCH IN LAWRENCE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Neosha McGuffee 217 Pennington-McGuffee Rd, Monticello, MS 39654.

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Judge: HERO is now in effect

HOUSTON (BP) — The Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) is now in effect, following a local judge's April 17 ruling that codified protected class status based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Judge Robert Schaffer of the Texas 152nd District Civil Court in Houston rendered a post-trial judgment April 17 on a jury's mixed findings in a February trial involving a range of city legal issues over what constitutes a valid signature on a petition.

Schaffer spent two months sorting through the jury's verdict as well as ongoing legal motions from both the city and opponents of the ordinance.

Schaffer's ruling credited the petition drive with 16,684 valid signatures — 585 short of the 17,269 requirement that would have placed the ordinance on the

ballot last November. The petition for a referendum was launched after Houston's city council passed

the controversial HERO measure in an 11-6 vote last May.

According to Ballotpedia.org, Schaffer is a Democrat.

"We will appeal," Dave Welch, executive director of the Houston Area Pastors Council, told the Southern Baptist TEXAN, "and we will fight for justice, what is right before God, and for the rule of law all the way to the Texas Supreme Court."

Democratic Houston Mayor Anise Parker, a self-avowed lesbian who made the ordinance a top priority, celebrated the April 17 ruling by Schaffer. "We have a HERO!" Parker wrote on her Twitter feed.

"We passed a good ordinance. We were right to reject repeal petition; jury agreed with us, judge agreed with us!"

The city's lead attorney Geoffrey Harrison, also a Democrat, called Schaffer's ruling and the earlier jury verdict "a powerful smack-down against the forces of discrimination and intolerance," the Houston Chronicle reported. "Maybe, just maybe, they'll reconsider their misguided ways."

In addition to the battle over the ordinance, Parker drew national attention when attorneys for the city filed subpoenas against five Houston pastors who were leaders in the coalition but not parties to the lawsuit. The court order called for records from sermons and discussions with church members about HERO and about homosexuality.

After religious liberty advocates across the nation cried foul, the city backed down and Parker had the orders withdrawn.



SCHAFER



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NEPAL

cont. from p. 1

would describe trying to get out like being on a trampoline with people carrying it and you're trying to walk from one side of it to the other — completely off-centered and unsettling, nearly impossible. We both prayed, 'Lord, please let us get out of this building.'"

Baptist Global Response (BGR), the Southern Baptist humanitarian organization based in Nashville, began the needs assessment process on April 27. The organization said the first response is expected to include basic survival needs like water, shelter, food, and healthcare.

Volunteer groups that work with BGR received Sphere Project Training in February, focusing on meeting victims' needs during humanitarian crises.

The damage to rural areas

has yet to be added to the news reports and death toll. Roads are damaged, and getting to these areas is difficult. Government officials estimate 80% of the houses in rural areas have been destroyed.

The quake occurred at a depth of 9.3 miles, which is considered shallow and more damaging than a deeper quake. News from remote areas near the quake's epicenter, where many more may have died, has been scant. International Christian workers warn that the days to come might be the hardest as reports continue to come in.

"The rural village homes will be damaged far beyond repair, and the death toll at this point is probably limited to the city centers," the Christian worker said. "All of the places where we work... it's devastating to think about what they are experiencing."

To learn more, visit gobgr.org.



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Awestruck • Habakkuk 3:1-6, 11-13, 16-19

The hymn writer Mark Altrogge penned it so well,

*"And I stand, I stand in awe of You
I stand, I stand in awe of You
Holy God, to whom all praise is due
I stand in awe of You"*

Habakkuk pens a hymn of prayer as he expresses his feelings toward God in response to the revelation which God has given him regarding the future of His people. He is indeed 'awestruck'. He shares what should be our response as well.

Stand in Awe (Habakkuk 3:1-2)

"O Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid" (v.2a NKJV)

The prophet's prayer was simple at first, "In wrath remember mercy" (v.2b)

We do not have to pray in eloquent words that flow with King James English, just the words of the heart to express our concerns to our Heavenly Father. Such was the prayer of Habakkuk.

Tremble in His Splendor (Habakkuk 3:3-6)

"His glory covered the heavens...His brightness was like the light...His ways are everlasting" (v.3b, 4a, 6d NKJV)

This is a theophany describing the presence of God. His glory covers everything and fills the earth with praise. His brilliance transcends everything and nothing is hidden from His power.

He stands above, through, and beyond all of His creation. There is nothing in comparison.

Habakkuk describes God as actively involved in every part of His creation and concerned for the well-being of all. Words are inadequate to describe His nature.

Celebrate His Victory (Habakkuk 3:11-15)

"You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed."

(Habakkuk 3:13)

The prophet continues his prayer hymn describing the wrath of God as punishes sin and protects His people. He caused the sun and moon to stand still to give His children time in battle. He trampled nations in anger. But most importantly He went forth for the salvation of His people with His Anointed One. Ultimately, He sent Jesus to provide the way for complete victory over evil. He is indeed worthy of celebration and praise.



Explore the Bible

with Kiely D. Young

Rejoice in Faith (Habakkuk 3:16-19)

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Habakkuk 3:18 NKJV)

Habakkuk concludes his prayer with a confession. He trembled at the revelation he had been given about God. He felt rotten to the core of his being. He knew God would deal with the wickedness. In the process, God would take care of His people. All of nature may be destroyed and there may be no harvest in the fields, but God would still take care of His people. He confesses his determination to rejoice in the God of his salvation. He proclaimed the Lord God to be his strength. He says

God will take him to the mountain tops with the sure footedness of the deer and not be afraid to enable him to walk closer to His heavenly Father.

Habakkuk has seen the judgmental side of God and heard with assurance that God will take care of those who follow Him and trust the truth of His Word. He further gives us a look at the justice of God. Both

sides are critical to understand. That is why we stand in awe.

Present cultures leave little room for both the love and wrath of God. They only want to hear of a god who will ultimately deliver everyone from punishment. Habakkuk describes the God of love and the God of wrath. Yes, we believe in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (NKJV) BUT...we also read and believe John 3:17-18, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (NKJV)

Habakkuk saw a world in confusion, but God gave him a vision of hope. He foresaw salvation through the Anointed One, the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6 NKJV)

"We stand; we stand in awe of You". Amen and Amen.

Young is retired Sunday School Director, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a member of Ridgecrest Church, Madison.

Stick with Encouragement • Acts 9:26-28, 11:21-26

Can you name two of the most influential men in the early church? I will hum that famous "Jeopardy" theme music while we wait for your answer. Did you say Peter? Did you say Paul? Gold Star answer! But wait...hold on a minute. If we could interview Peter and Paul, they would challenge your answer. Peter would probably say that if it weren't for his brother, Andrew, he would have kept right on fishing for fish instead of for people. Paul would probably say that if it had not been for a man named Ananias, he would have kept right on killing Christians instead of becoming one. Certainly, Paul would tell you about his friend named Barnabas. Where would ANY of us be without those special God-sent encouragers?

According to chapter one of the gospel of John the Apostle, Andrew was initially a disciple of John the Baptizer. Shortly after the baptism of Jesus, Andrew became a follower of Jesus. The very first thing Andrew did after meeting Jesus was to introduce his brother, Peter, to Jesus. Thank goodness for Andrew. He is an example of the urgency of connecting people with Jesus. That's encouragement. Result? Along with Andrew, Peter became one of the first of twelve disciples chosen by Jesus. After the ascension, Peter the Jesus-denying fisherman became

Peter the Jesus-testifying preacher with a powerful message of the change Jesus can make in lives.

Likewise, according to chapter nine of the book of Acts, Doctor Luke details for us the salvation experience of Saul of Tarsus. (Saul was his Hebrew family tribal name. Paul was his public Gentile Roman name). He was on his way to Damascus with official letters from the High Priest in Jerusalem authorizing him to arrest any believers he might find worshipping Jesus in synagogues there. A blinding light from Heaven stopped Paul in his tracks, arresting him instead! Jesus spoke directly to Paul, giving him his genuine marching orders. Paul's first "encouragement" came from Jesus.

Three days of no food and water and physical blindness blessed Paul with the gift of true spiritual insight. God brought a man named Ananias who lived in Damascus to speak to Paul. I'm sure Ananias was not comfortable with his assignment:

go speak to the very man who came to Damascus to arrest you for your faith in Jesus. Despite the personal and spiritual risk, Ananias went to the house and laid hands on Paul. He received his sight.

Ananias was the first to call Paul "brother." Paul spent the next several days being encouraged and comforted by the same disciples he came to capture. All of the Old Testament scripture scrolls Paul

knew by heart exploded with enlightenment, revealing the prophetic footprints of this Jesus he had despised. He was be-

ing prepared to be a light not only to his Jewish kinsmen but also to the Gentiles.

Paul's gospel journey was just beginning. However, his reputation of being diametrically opposed to people of "The Way" preceded Paul everywhere he went. Believers were afraid of him. God had a man and a plan to introduce Paul. His name was Barnabas. We meet Barnabas in the closing verses of Acts 4 at the real estate office in Jerusalem. He is a Levite

from Cyprus. As an example of precious personal sacrifice, Barnabas sells a valuable piece of land. He brings the entire purchase price and lays it at the feet of the apostles to be used for ministry in the early church. Barnabas is introduced to readers of scripture as a man named "Joseph" which means "add to me." The apostles gave him the name "Barnabas" meaning son of encouragement. The word for encouragement here is the same word translated for Holy Spirit, paraklete or comforter.

In Acts 9, God used Barnabas to vouch for the testimony of Paul, introducing him properly to the believers in Jerusalem. Barnabas stood in the gap for Paul to build a bridge for the gospel. In Acts 11, we also see Barnabas bringing Paul to Antioch to meet with believers there. The disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch. Barnabas and Paul faithfully served together at Antioch and were sent from there on the first missionary journey.

Qualities of a Holy Spirit-filled encourager resided in Barnabas: partnership, goodness, faithfulness, friendship. In relationships, love is not negotiable. Encouragement is journey fuel. Stick with those. Don't leave home without them.

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



Revivals & Homecomings

► **Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth:** Homecoming, May 3, 10 a.m. Mark Trammell Quartet, music.

► **Salem (Kellis Store) Church, Kemper County:**

Homecoming, May 3; singing, 10:30 a.m., followed by worship and dinner on the grounds; Jesse Napp, pastor and speaker.

► **New Salem Church, McClellan Creek:** Homecoming, May

3; services, 10:30 a.m.; The Little River, music.

► **Highland Church, Senatobia:** Revival, May 3 - 6; Sun., 5 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Tommy Vinson, speaker; Glenn Herring, music.

► **Clear Branch Church, Westerson:** Homecoming, May 3; High Roads III in concert, 9:30 a.m.;

worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; Jonathan Sherwin, speaker; Wayne Moak, pastor.

► **Victory Church, Brookhaven:** Revival, May 3 - 6; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by fellowship meal and 5 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Jeff Davis, speaker; Bobby Free-

man, music; Thomas Wicker, pastor.

► **Silver Creek Church, McClellan Creek:** Homecoming/May Day services, May 3; services begin at 10 a.m. with music by Tim Frith and the Gospel Echoes (love offering); worship, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds.

Same sex marriage: friends make the difference

NASHVILLE (BP) — Americans who have homosexual and lesbian friends are twice as likely as those who have none to say same sex marriage should be legal. More than half of Americans, meanwhile, say homosexuality is not sinful — a stark change from only a few years ago.

Such survey results place evangelicals increasingly in a minority position in American culture over same sex relationships.

Nashville-based LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources, in a phone survey of 2,000 Americans on same sex marriage reported that friendship and faith play an influential role in how Americans view the issue.

"When it comes to support for gay marriage, a lot of it depends" on who one's friends are, said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research. "Those who have gay or lesbian friends are the most open to gay marriage."

Regardless of friends, Stetzer said, evangelicals are more likely to consider homosexual behavior sinful.

37 and counting

Currently 37 states allow same sex marriage, though ceremonies are on hold pending appeals in some places. Later this month the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments that could make same sex marriage legal nationwide.

Half of Americans agree with the statement, "I believe gay marriage should be legal." For Americans who have homosexual or lesbian friends, that number jumps to 60%. Among Americans with no homosexual or lesbian friends, only a third say same sex marriage should be legal.

Among faith groups, Catholics (56%) agree more than Protestants (40%) that it should be

Americans who have gay and/or lesbian friends compared to those who do not

Gay marriage should be legal.



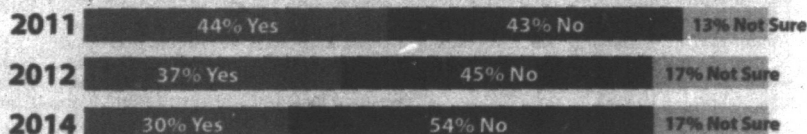
Sex between people of the same gender is sinful, regardless of its legality.



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Among Americans

I believe homosexual behavior is a sin.



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

legal but less than the non-religious (73%).

Evangelicals, defined as those who identify themselves as born again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian, are least likely to support same sex marriage. Thirty percent say same sex marriage should be legal, compared to 38% of evangelicals with homosexual or lesbian friends who say same

sex marriage should be legal.

"Culture is dramatically shifting on the issue," Stetzer said.

The study confirmed that Americans have become polarized over the question of same sex marriage. Thirty-six percent strongly agree same sex marriage should be legal. Thirty-five percent strongly disagree: Six percent are unsure.

Behavior sinful?

Researchers found similar responses to the statement, "I believe that sex between people of the same gender is sinful, regardless of its legality," (46%) while the same number disagree. Seven percent are unsure.

Two-thirds of evangelicals say sex between two people of

the same gender remains sinful, whether it is legal or not. Among those with gay or lesbian friends, 62% of evangelicals agree that it is sinful. Fifty-four percent, meanwhile, say sex between people of the same gender is not sinful, with eight percent unsure.

For comparison, LifeWay Research also conducted an online survey asking 2,252 Americans, "Do you believe homosexual behavior is a sin?" In 2014, 30% answered "yes." Fifty-four percent answered "no."

By contrast, 37% said yes in a similar 2012 survey and 44% said yes in 2011. Forty-three percent said homosexual behavior is not a sin in the 2011 survey, along with 45% in 2012.

Same sex weddings

Even if same sex marriage becomes legal nationwide, few Protestant senior pastors are likely to officiate at same sex weddings. Most see same sex marriages as wrong, according to a study of 1,000 Protestant senior pastors from LifeWay Research.

Eight in 10 of the senior pastors disagree with the statement, "I see nothing wrong with two people of the same gender getting married." That includes 74% who strongly disagree. About 18% of Protestant senior pastors agree with the statement, including 11% who strongly agree.

A 2010 LifeWay Research survey of pastors found similar results. In 2010, 83% disagreed.

"Church leaders have traditionally been seen as the champions of all things moral in society," Stetzer said. "As public perceptions of morality change, pastors find themselves in an increasingly unpopular position."

Pastors' wives to gather in Columbus during SBC meet

COLUMBUS, Oh. (BP) — Ministers' wives attending the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention are invited to a trio of women's events based on the theme, "Radiant." These events include a Pastors' Wives Conference, a Ministers' Wives Luncheon, and a Women's Expo.

The Pastors' Wives Conference, held during the morning session of the Pastors' Conference on June 15, from 8:45 - 11:45 a.m., will feature teaching sessions, table discussions, and a live poll.

Speakers include Christine Hoover of Charlottesville, Va., addressing "Four Anchors Every Pastor's Wife Needs;" Lori McDaniel of Rogers, Ar., on "Living on Mission;" and Naghmeh Abedini on the persecuted church and its effect on pastors' families.

Hoover is the author of *The Church Planter's Wife*. McDaniel serves as a women's consultant for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Va., and Abedini is the wife of imprisoned Iranian American pastor, Saeed Abedini.

Kathy Litton, the national consultant for ministry to pastors' wives for the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, will conduct a live poll of the audience on the subjects of marriage and ministry. Kristin and Eric Yeldell of First Church in Naples, Fl., again will lead music for the session.

The conference is hosted in the Hyatt Regency Ballroom of the Greater Columbus Convention Center. There is no cost for the event and registration is not required.



Women who serve in any facet of local church leadership, missions, and denominational work are invited to attend.

The annual SBC Ministers' Wives Luncheon will take place at noon on June 16, also in the Regency Ballroom. The luncheon's guest speaker is Angie Smith, wife of Todd Smith, lead singer of Dove Award-winning group Selah and author of *I Will Carry You: The Sacred Dance of Grief and Joy*, as well as the popular blog entitled, *Bring the Rain*.

She holds a master's degree in developmental psychology from Vanderbilt University in Nashville and lives with her husband and daughters in Nashville.

The guest musician is TaRanda Greene, who began her career with the Southern Gospel group, The

Greens. She has traveled with the Bill Gaither Homecoming Tour and has been a guest vocalist at the Brooklyn Tabernacle. After joining The Greens, she met her husband Tony. In 2010, Greene found herself a widow and a single mother of two girls, a story she now shares through music and testimony.

Luncheon tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at lifeway.com/Event/womens-event-sbc-ministers-wives-luncheon, or by contacting Mary Cox at mary.cox@northmetro.net.

A Women's Expo displaying resources for ministry to women will be open in the foyer to the ballroom prior to both events. Pastor's wife and author Diane Nix, wife of Preston Nix, New Orleans Seminary professor of evangelism and evangelistic preaching, will direct the expo.

Pastors' Wives Conference organizer Susie Hawkins said rather than attaching itself to the Pastors' Conference theme as in years past, the Pastors' Wives Conference will now carry the same theme as the Ministers' Wives Luncheon.

"We want to encourage women to be radiant in their personal spiritual walks, marriages, and ministries," said Hawkins, wife of O.S. Hawkins, president and chief executive officer of GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas.

Mary Cox, president of this year's luncheon, explains this year's theme which is drawn from Exodus 34, where the Israelites saw that Moses' face was radiant.